

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently amended) An automated method in a communications network, the method including the steps of:

detecting submission of a first ~~the~~ search query from a client to at least one search engine; and

storing a search trail corresponding to the first search query, said search trail including at least one trail step corresponding to two consecutively accessed pages that are accessed by the client via a hyperlink between the pages;

providing a data storage system on a server storing a plurality of search trails resulting from search queries from a same user and other users; and,

receiving a second search query from a client to a search engine; and

searching the data storage system to match the received second search query to the first ~~a~~ search query corresponding to at least one search trail to identify at least one related search trail stored on the data storage system; and,

presenting search results to the client based upon the at least one related search trail.

Claims 2-4 (Canceled).

5. (Previously presented) The automated method of claim 49, wherein the step of detecting submission of a completed form object is performed at the client and includes:

locating form objects in an object model of content served to a client; and

adding a routine to each form object to enable interception of the completed form object upon submission.

6. (Previously presented) The automated method of claim 5, wherein the step of locating all form objects in a document object model of content served to a client is carried out after the content has been served to the client.

7. (Previously presented) The automated method of claim 6, wherein the content is an HTML document, and all form objects in a document object model of the HTML

document are located once a browser event, signaling that the browser has finished loading a web page.

8. (Previously presented) The automated method of claim 7, wherein the HTML document includes a GET or a POST form.

9. (Currently amended) The automated method of claim 1, wherein the step of detecting submission of **the first** a-search query to at least one search engine is optionally selectable at the client.

10. (Previously presented) The automated method of claim 1, wherein the step of storing a search trail includes:

recording the URL of the consecutively accessed sites.

11. (Previously presented) The automated method of claim 10, wherein the step storing a search trail further includes:

recording one or more of a user identifier, the network address of the client, and search term or terms entered by the user at the client.

12. (Previously presented) The automated method of claim 10, wherein the step of storing a search trail further includes:

transmitting the one or more parameters of at least one trail step identified at the client to the data storage system of the server for recordal.

13. (Previously presented) The automated method of claim 12, and further including:

initially recording the one or more parameters in a RAM table at the trail recorder server.

14. (Previously presented) The automated method of claim 13, and further including:

periodically saving RAM table data to disk-based tables at the trail recorder server.

15. (Previously presented) The automated method of claim 14, wherein a first disk-based table stores data characterising each search trail.

16. (Previously presented) The automated method of claim 14, wherein a second disk-based table stores data characterising the consecutively accessed pages in each search trail.

17. (Previously presented) The automated method of claim 1, wherein the number of consecutively accessed pages is limited to a predetermined maximum.

Claims 18-23 (Cancelled).

24. (Currently amended) The automated method of claims 1, wherein the step of searching the data storage system to match the received **second** search query to **the first a** search query corresponding to at least one search trail includes:

conducting a full text search on the data storage system for at least part of a search query corresponding to at least one of the plurality of search trails.

25. (Currently amended) The automated method of claim 24, wherein step of searching the data storage system to match the received search query to **the first a**-search query corresponding to at least one search trail includes:

limiting the search trails to search trails resulting search queries from a same user as the received **second** search query.

Claim 26 (Cancelled).

27. (Previously presented) The automated method of claim 1, wherein the step of presenting search results to the client based upon the at least one related search trail includes:

presenting the related search trails at the client.

28. (Previously presented) The automated method of claim 1, wherein the step of presenting search results to the client based upon the at least one related search trail includes:

ordering the related search results by one or more ranking criteria.

29. (Previously presented) The automated method of claim 28, wherein the ranking criteria include any one or more of date, inverse document frequency match, target search engine, user identifier, or trail weight indicative of the cumulative frequency of user visits to steps in a related search trail.

30. (Previously presented) The automated method of claim 1, wherein the communications network is the Internet, an intranet, an extranet or other network running client/server applications.

31. (Previously presented) The automated method of claim 1, wherein the search engine is maintained on the client.

32. (Previously presented) A system for in a communications network for presenting search results to a client based upon a search query, the system including:

a search trail recorder for recording a search trail including at least one trail step corresponding to two consecutively accessed pages that are accessed by the client via a hyperlink between the pages;

a data storage system for storing a plurality of search trails, the search trails resulting from search queries from a same user and other users; and,

a server system programmed to provide a trail searcher for searching the data storage system to match the received search query to a search corresponding to at least one search trail to identify at least one related search trail stored on the server.

33. (Previously presented) The system of claim 32, which includes at least one client including:

a search query detector for detecting submission of a search query from the client to a search engine; and

a search trail recorder for recording a search trail of one or more parameters of sites accessed consecutively following return of search query results to the client.

34. (Previously presented) The system of claim 32, wherein the server system is further programmed to provide:

an adapter manager for maintaining an adapter table of known search command formats for a plurality of search engines for identifying one or more search query parameters are entered by a user.

35. (Previously presented) The system of claim 33, wherein the search query detector is a toolbar, browser addon or extension, deskbar, agent, proxy or like client-side application.

Claims 36-40 (Cancelled).

41. (Currently amended) The automated method of claim 1, wherein the step of detecting submission of the **first** search query includes:

determining if part of the form object matches a known search command format of any of a plurality of search engines, and

maintaining an adapter table of known search command formats for a plurality of search engines for identifying one or more search query parameters are entered by a user.

42. (Previously presented) The automated method of claim 41, wherein the search command format includes the network address of a search engine program for executing the search query.

Claims 43-44 (Cancelled).

45. (Previously presented) The automated method of claim 41, and further including:

periodically validating the search command formats maintained in the adapter table.

46. (Previously presented) The automated method of claim 41, and further including:

automatically identifying a search command format of a new search engine; and
updating the adapter table.

47. (Previously presented) The automated method of claim 41, and further including:

collecting search information identifying a search box page of a search engine;
and

identifying the search command format from the search information.

48. (Previously presented) The automated method of claim 47, wherein the step of collecting search information includes:

collecting the HTML code of the search box; and
parsing the HTML code to identify the search command format.

49. (Currently amended) The automated method of claim 2, wherein the step of detecting submission of **the first** a-search query to at least one search engine includes detecting submission of a completed form object.

50. (Previously presented) An automated method as claimed in claim 1 wherein storing a search trail ends in the event that the client accesses a new page from a page corresponding to a search trail without following a hyperlink between the pages.

51. (Previously presented) An automated method as claimed in claim 48 wherein the client accessing a new page from a page corresponding to a search trail without following a hyperlink between the pages, includes:

accessing a new page without causing a referrer to be sent to the server.

52. (Previously presented) An automated method as claimed in claim 49 wherein accessing a new page without causing a referrer to be sent to the server includes any one or more of:

typing a URL of the new page into the browser;

pressing a home button of a browser.

53. (Previously presented) The automated method of claim 1, wherein the step of storing a search trail includes:

increasing a trail weight in response to the number of times a step on the trail is visited by a user.